Solace for SAINTS in the SADDEST TIMES.

From the Consideration of the happy temperature and Lovely composure of all Times and Providences, as to Gods glory and their good.

Held forth in a brief Discourse on the first Words of the *CANTICLES.*

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TO THE

RIGHT HONORABLE,

MY

Honored good LADY, the

Lady Willoughby,

Wife to the Right honorable the

Lord Willoughby

of PARRAM.

Madam,



Hen I determined to publish this Discourse, Your Honour came first to my thoughts

as

as in dedicating it to whom I could only acquieſce.

Not that Your Honour had any ſpeciall title to it, by hearing it or deſiring it; but my hope is there may be more providence in it then my own, who am ambitious to ſeal up ſome teſtimony of the high eſteem I have of Your Honour, to whom I am obliged, as by ſo much Worthineſs of Your

own

own, so by many favours received.

Madam, I question not but you have your part in Afflictions as a Daughter of Adam, and not the fewer as a Daughter of Abraham. You may have need of a Cordiall, and then Providence will be remarkable in sending This to you; and I desire you may see your interest in this Consolation: if you be strong

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and feel no sinking of Spirits, it is through the Experience of this Truth which is here delivered.

Madam, I have honourable thoughts of you, and great desires on your behalf, and therefore shall no longer by this intertainment keep you from swifter injoyments then while I commence this suite for you, That, as not a few have born away the fruitfulnes

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of your *Diſpoſition in the* ſweetneſs *of their own ſpirits, ſo your Honour may be abundantly ſatisfied and refreſhed from the gracious* preſence *and* appearance *of the* Lord *in all his* diſpenſations. *In this moſt humble tender of himſelf accept, Madam,*

Your Honors moſt affectionately devoted, as much Obliged Servant,

JOSHUA SPRIGGE.

A WORD TO THE READER.

THis Discourse being delivered some years since (when the publike affairs appear'd most perplext and dangerous) is now published upon the very same account and occasion it was first Delivered, with some hopes it may be some

some way serviceable, (through the presence of Christ with it) to demulce and allwage some to a quiet and peaceable Comportment with the present administration, by discovering and setting before them a new and blessed face and Image in every (even the worst) state of things.

The ground and matter I work upon being those first words of the CANTICLES; my project rises by rendring the title of the book not onely to the form of words but to the subject matter of it: which (viz. the matter) being all varie-

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ty of dispensation to the Churches, may teach us a new Arithmetick to cast up Times and Things by.

The condition of many a Man is like a good Old Instrument that is hung up by the Wals, as of no use for want of tuning onely: or like a Lesson that is so musicall, that onely skill is wanting to make admirable Musick of it: where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is Musick.

I have followed the Analogy or Resemblance of Divine workings and providence to a Song, but in some gengrall Parallels only,

ly, it might have been prosecuted through many more particulars.

The Discourse had not the successe to be Well-understood when it was delivered, it may have the greater blessing to empty down upon the Reader.

The

The Order and Parts of the Ensuing Discourse.

1. Introduction, *by shewing the occasion of this discourse*, viz. *a project to comfort Saints in every appearance of things, and the fitness of the subject for such a purpose.*
2. Explication. 1. *The ground and matter whereupon the Project stands*, viz. *the Comparing the name of this book of* Canticles *with the subject matter of it.* 2. *An inquirie into the subject matter of the book of* Canticles. 3. *A report of the subject matter, what it is*, viz. *A Propheticall History and Historicall Prophecy of all the times of the Church.*
3. *The* Observation. *That this is a Song, yea the Song of Songs.*
   1. *The Remarkableness of putting such a name on such a thing, shewed in respect of the severall sad Notes that are in this Song.*
   2. *The proof of it yet to be a Song, yea the*

the Song of Songs. 1. By the matter of it. Variety it self. 2. The form Unitie.

4. The Application and improvement of this truth.

1. Information, All Gods administrations to beleevers, publique and particular, are as a Song; yea secondly, a Song of Songs.

1. A Song, the Analogy opened in severall particulars. 1. A Song consists of measured feet. So all Gods administrations are foreseen weighed, and measured, though not alwayes the same measures, and the reason of that difference assigned from the severall times and ages of the Children.

2 It is a Song of Songs. This applyed to Christs administration in three respects.

1. The variety that is in it. 2. The Rhyme or ending of all: One thing rhyming to another, and in the end all sounding alike, even Love. 3. The Elegancies and glorious contrivances that are therein.

2. Dehortation, 1. Not to look with such dismall apprehensions on Christs

Christs administration, publicke or private, however it appear, seeing in a Song. 2. Not to be wearie and impatient.

3. Exhortation, 1. *To sing this Song,* (1.) *with lightsome hearts, walk with God through all providences. Motive,* 1. *The burden of the Song is Love.* 2. *the Contrivance is Gods, for the glory of his dearest Son, and his Spouse the Church.* 2. *Exhort. so to observe this Song* (1. *the workings of Christ for us*) *as to be turned into such a mind and such actions as please Christ.*

4. Direction, *To reconcile us to every Administration. To that end let us.* 1. *Compare the parts together.* 2. *Cover the uncomely parts with cleanly notions.* 3. *Consider our acceptableness to God in every change and condition.*

The

CANT. I. I.

The Song of Songs.

MY design in choosing this Text, is, to cure and prevent (if it be not too late) that *weakness* which the unbelieving fears of the people of God may bring them into, of the like dangerous Consequence, as the losing of blood and spirits. The Cure of fear is Faith; but for as much as to the exercise of Faith Men had need have cleer and composed spirits, therefore have I pitched upon this Subject.

Saul was often troubled with an evil spirit, [illegible] and that which did him ease, was *David* playing upon a Harp before him. And *Eliahs* spirit being muddied, as it were by passion, cannot Prophesie til the mud was setled again by Minstrels. 2 *King* 3.15. The spirit of the world, either carnal love, or fear, or any other passion, is like the evil spirit that troubled *Saul* and *Eliah*, and faith is as Prophesying. Now when the hand of the Lord, whereby we believe comes upon us, the other hand, whereby we are troubled, is taken off us; the spirit of faith comes not, but the spirit of the world must be cast out, as *Hagar* and *Sarah*, the bond-woman and free-woman could not live together; and you see *melick* was the instrumental means in those cases. Therefore

I have chosen a Subject of this nature, in the discoursing whereof; if the Lord Jesus, the wise charmer, make me by his spirit to charm wisely, I hope it will be in some measure conducible to the end proposed. *A Song of Songs, which was Solomons.* So that I desire you to bear me witness, I do it not out of respect to the time of the yeer, * which is with unreasonable superstition preferr'd by too many; but to the times of the Church, the occasions and necessities of the Saints, which call for all the help of this nature that we can make, I mean to hold up their spirits in the present carriages or miscarriages of things; and the truth that this Text travells of, bears no small proportion of conduciblenes to this end; and were it but clearly understood, strongly believed, and effectually ap-

* It being a festivall time when this Sermon was preached.

plyed to you by the ſpirit of Chriſt, it would be like *a bundle of mirrhe between your breſts*, the virtue whereof is, that it preſerves from corruption and infection, and *a cluſter of Camphire* which makes men *vegetiores et firmiores*, as *Pliny* obſerves.

Here therefore, I ſhal not ſpend time about the diviſion of this Text into the *Title*, and the *Authour* of the Book. But the Notion or Obſervation I ſhal preſent to you at this time, and preſs upon you, is, from comparing the *name* of this Book with the *ſubject* matter of it: The name is, *A Song of Songs*, The Subject matter, what is that? There are divers opinions of this, chiefly three: Some make the Subject to be the mutuall and reciprocall makings out of affections and fel-

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lowſhip, between Chriſt and every *Beleever*. 2ly. Others between Chriſt and the *Catholick Church*, or generall Aſſembly, from the beginning to the end. 3ly. A third ſort of Interpreters, make it a brief, compendious Propheſie of the mutuall carriages and aſpects, of Chriſt and his *Churches*, (the *particular* Churches of the Goſpell, as wel as the Church of the *Jews*,) from *Solomons* time to the end of the world. And though there be (as a * reverend Divine well obſerves) a holy and uſeful truth in the two former; yet this latter might be convinced to be the more *adæquate* ſcope and ſubject of this Book (by many Arguments, if it were our buſineſs now) which doth exceedingly commend this Book to us, as being a *Prophetical hiſtory*, and Hiſtorical Propheſie, giving us

* M. *Cotton* of Boſton in New England.

a brief and delightful view of all the acts and *Monuments* of the Church, (of particular Churches in their severall and successive times,) and this book is called a Song. This is that which is remarkable, that such a Subject should make a Song. You will say, wherein lies the remarkableness? Herein: If this be a compleat and a perfect Propheſie (as it is) of all times, then it must record as wel the *evil* times of the Church, as the *Halcion* days; and the *defections* of the Church, as wel as her *perfections*; Gods *chastening* dispensations, as wel as his *affectionate* embraces; his *frowns* as well as his *smiles*; his *plucking up* of Churches, as wel as his *planting* of them, the *casting off* the *Jews*, as wel as the *calling* of the Gentiles. And that this should be fit matter for a Song, seems strange

I believe: As if one should write the story of Gods dealing with *England* from the first Reformation to the present, or to the end of the present agitations, & cal it a *Song*; you would think it an unfit name: though we have had much mercy, yet you would think that the Denomination should rather follow *deteriorem partem*, and it should be more proper to call it the *Lamentation of England*, (that is fallen from such a height of peace and prosperity) then a *Song*, yet are there as sad times as these recorded in this book, yea, and worse, (not only these but others, worse I say,) for here *Solomon* by the spirit of Prophesie touches the very tops and eminent points of all times that should succeed from his own, yet this he, by the holy Ghost, cals a Song, yea, a *Song of Songs*.

I do shew you this in some particulars,

culars, that there are very *doleful notes* in this Song, v. 2. That yet it is a *Song*. 3. What use we should make of this.

For the 1. to instance but in a few things, in the beginning of this Propheſie; First, you have the *blackneſs* of the Church, through the *defection* of *Solomon*, who *kept not his own vines* (his own wives from Idolatry,) and yet this is one particular that goes to this Song. 2. You have the *diviſion* of the Kingdom, the revolt of the 10. Tribes, from the houſe of *David*, (for *Rehoboams* ſtifneſs and folly) v. 6. *My mothers children were angry with me.* 3. You have the ſad eſtate of the faithful, diſperſed through thoſe 10. Tribes in that revolt: in what diſtreſs were they to avoid Idolatry, and to enjoy the pure Ordinances of God, while they could not injoy their Conſciences,

v. 5. I am black.

sciences without exposing themselves to one of these great evils, either the wrath and *persecution* of *Jeroboham*, if they should not go up to the *Calves* but to *Jerusalem*, or else they must forsake their habitations of a sudden; perhaps to their undoing! This was a sad strait, yet this is part of the Song. *v.* 7. *Tell me, oh thou whom my soul loveth, where &c.* Then, 4ly You have the sad estate of *Judah*, falling away from God, (as after 3 yeers of *Rehoboam* they did) then God sent *Pharaoh Shishack* King of Ægypt, to yoke them. 2 *Chron.* 12. 8. This you have, *v.* 9. and so I might run through the next *Chapter*. In the 16. *v.* of this 1 *Chap.* you have a commendation of the House and Worship of God, that it was pure and *green*; yet *v.* 1. of *Chap.* 2. *I am the rose of Sharon*, whether you take it of *Christ* or

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the *Church*; though *Josiah* had made the *bed green* by his Reformation, yet *Christ* comes not to his spouses *bed*, but rather eals his Church *abroad*. *Sharon* was an open field under *Lebanon*, where the beasts did feed; Or take it of the *Church*, she was the *Rose of Sharon*. There was no *fence* nor *vulture*, weeds might grow up with her, or the beasts of the field might crop or tread her down; and so it was you know *Josiah*, how fair a Rose, but how soon cropt by *Pharoah Necho*; and the succeeding Kings were placed and displaced by the *Babylonians* and the *Egyptians*, at their pleasure, and at length the Kingdom was laid waste by the *Babylonians*; yet this is part of the Song, and such is the composure of the whole book.

But I may not instance in any more; but as it is in the world, there

there are *hills* and *valleys* all over the earth, so is it in this history; as you have hills of eminent prosperity, so there are valleys of dark adversity; yet this is called a Song, and that most properly, yea, *A Song of Songs*, as we might shew in 4. respects, *viz.* the *Author*, the *Matter*, the *Form* and the *End*; but the Author, and the end, I shal decline for brevity; it may be, I may touch upon them in the use. The matter and form of this most excellent Song, is expreſt in these two words, *Variety* and *Unity*; variety is the matter; there are various things spoken of various conditions, yet these are made up into one, unity is the form. 1. Variety is not repugnant to the nature of a Song, to have for its subject, Gods various dispensations to the Church; and the Churches various affe-

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&tion, condition and converſation towards God. *Good* and *Evil* days, though they *diſagree* in *themſelves*, yet may make up a *Song together*; Here in this Song is all the variety that may be; all that was or will be, ſince *Solomons* time, to the worlds end, is here couched together. Though a deluge of darkneſs and ignorance hides the particulars of Gods great works from our eyes til they are done, (as the waters did the old world,) yet the tops of the Mountains may be ſeen here.

2 Here is *Unity* in this variety; all thoſe ſeveral and various (Yea we may think contrary) paſſages, conditions and times, ſerve to make up one compleat piece of *poeſie* or invention, and one glorious piece of adminiſtration; for there is ſuch a contexture of them, and they are ſo diſpoſed, that

that in ſtead of fighting one againſt another, and contradicting one another, they do mutually *illuſtrate* and ſet off one another. The Painters colours, ſhould he ſhake them and *mix* them all together in a pot, he would loſe them all, they would fight one with another, and would either be no perfect colours, or but one, but being layd on a table by the art of the *Painter*, they ſerve for excellent uſe, and are exceeding beautiful. So it is here, the *miſeries* and *mercies*, the *defections* and *perfections* of the Church, being layd and diſpoſed by ſo skilful a penſil, as is the hand and wiſdom of God, make up a ſight exceeding glorious.

Now what Uſe may we make of this, that God hath compoſed the affairs of the Church into a Song; certainly the Song is not its own end; God did not expreſs them

Uſe.

them in this form for the form sake, as if he were more delighted with a Song then *Prose*, or as if we should be taken with the expression, and look no further: There is a *truth* that lies under the *expression*; and this outward expression (I mean the form and words of this Song) is but a weak shadow of the inward truth. Adam put names upon the creatures according to their natures, and God gives outward forms to the creatures agreeable to their ranks; the most excellent outward form to man, because he hath the most excellent inside; therefore he hath received a more comely and beautiful outside; and the Angels, because they come more near to pure Intelligences and to the understanding of God, then men, therefore if they have any outward form (as some think it is neces-

sary

sary they should (none being absolutely simple but God) yet it is very subtile and spiritual. *So then, Gods meaning in expressing those things, the affairs of Christs Kingdom, in all times, by the name, and in the form of a Song, is to tell and teach us, what a notion we should have of those things themselves, cloathed with this form, and called by this name; that the series and substance of them is as a Song, or is that analogically in a way of resemblance, that this form of words is properly.* Therefore is the description of these things, a Song, because the *things themselves* are so: As, therefore is the picture beautiful, because the face, in imitation, or expression whereof it is made, is beautifull. I shall shew this *analogy* between the affairs of Christs Kingdom (contained and transacted successively and orderly) and a Song, in

The Observation.

in some particulars; and herein I shal take in other considerations, besides what the *Hebrew Songs* do afford, for so this subject will give me leave, which is a *Song of Songs*, what ever thing is delightful or admirable in any *Song*, (I mean in the *Songs* of any language) is in this.

First, Then the universall and common nature of all Songs requires, that they be of measured feet, of strict numbers, every line consists of so many measures, therefore they are called *metra*: All Poems are not alike for feet and measures; every language differs from other, and hath variety in it self, and your *Lyrick* poems (such as *Davids* Psalmes and this book is) have a greater liberty then other kind of verse, their feet and measures being very much arbitrary, more or fewer in a verse, as the compo-

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ser should choose, but *numbers* there are in all, though somewhat latent from us. Now what would the Lord teach us hereby, but that all the affairs of his Church are foreseen in his Counsell: all their times and changes, mercies and miseries, the administration of Christs Kingdom, is a set form, even as a *Song* is; it cannot vary a Title from the Counsel of God, no more then a verse can without lameness or hobling. *Known to the Lord are all his works &c.* Acts 15. 18. *He worketh all things according to the Counsel of his wil.* Ephes. 1. 11. Gods wil, which hath an infinite variety in it, is determined by his Counsel, (*q*) So for particular believers, all the transactions that concern their souls, are a known, certain, and unvariable form: Christ hath set how many temptations, and how long; how many afflictions, and how

long, how much knowledg and holinels, what ever befalls them from the beginning to the end of their days, their sins cannot hinder any good determined from coming in its order, place & time, nor can bring any evil upon them unseasonably or uncertainly, but as the feet & measures of a *Song*, succeed orderly, whereby the integrity thereof is preserved; so it is here, God hath not left himself room to insert one blessing more then he purposed from eternity (nor needs he) nor left himself liberty to crowd in one Cross more then went to the making up of the *Song*: But as *Lyrick verse* hath a greater scope for variety and uncertainty, then other Poems; so doth the Lord shew a great liberty in his administrations, both publike and private, it is *verse*, as if it were not; God observes numbers, as

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If he obſerved them not, he conceals his art from us; at leaſt wiſe. He is not bound, that this part of the Song that is now ſinging, ſhould have the ſame meaſures that was 2000, years ago, or to deal with his Church, or particular beleevers, now, according to the ſame Tenor that he did formerly: Becauſe he did not ſpare *Iſrael* for thoſe ſinnes that are rife amongſt us, ſhal we ſay he cannot ſpare us? I might inſtance in many things, wherein God hath vindicated his liberty already; and for particular believers, there is a manifeſt difference profeſſed by the Lord himſelf and his pen-men, in his carriage to us and former beleevers. *We are come not to the Mountain &c. Better things are reſerved for us*: We are not children in non-age, but heirs grown up, and ſo we have more love and grace,

Gal. 4. 1.
Heb. 11. 40.
Heb. 12. 18.

and are leſs ſnib'd then they: God is not bound to lead us about in the wilderneſs, as he did them; Nay, *he hath promiſed to ſhorten his work in righteouſneſs.* Rom. 9. 28. So that, though Chriſt ſpins a long thread of patience, yet at length, and even on the ſudden, he will cut the thread: agreeable to this, ſome think that this laſt diviſion that is going upon the *ſeventh Thouſand* of yeers, ſhal not be above 700 yeers, yet as much and more ſhal be done in this ſpace, then in any 1000. before; for as allthings draw neerer their Center and period of their motion, they make more ſpeed. Thus the times and things of the Church, and of each particular beleever, are a *Song*, both as they are contrived and acted by Chriſt.

Eſa. 10. 22. The conſumption upon the earthly, Antichriſtian Church State, ſhal overflow of a ſudden, as the deluge of the old world.

2. It is *a Song of Songs*; herein, I ſhal take in ſome Conſiderations,

rations, not essential to al Songs, or the Songs of all languages; though the *Hebrew* hath a resemblance of all the delightful properties of any kind of Song (the *Hebrew* and our *English* have greater store of these properties I shal mention, then any language) I shal instance but in 3. things. 1. The Variety that is in some *Songs*. 2. The Rhime. 3. The Elegancies. First, it is the commendation of a *Song*, if it be of a *delightful*, pleasing subject, and variety is a great commendation, and bestows much delightfulness upon a subject, when the invention is *copious* and *various*, when there be various persons and various parts acted by those persons various times, tempers, conditions; as this is the snare of *Romant's* (invented stories) they have such a pleasing variety of passages and accidents,

as steal away too much time and heart from those that read them; why, here is all the *variety* in the world, in Christs and the Churches actions, sweetly tempered and subdued to a delightful harmony, all is an exchange of *love*, between Christ and his Church, but here is sometimes *amantium iræ*, and then *redintegratio amoris*, sometime Christ making love to his Church, and *slighted* by her, then the Church as much in love with Christ and as little *satisfied*; sometimes the husband casts his wife into *prison*, and then fetches her out and sets her upon a *throne:* My beloved, the variety of conditions that the Church appears in, as in several dresses, is like *Josephs* Coat of many colours, commends the mystery the more (being subdued and tempered as before,) even as many flowers of a various colour,

lour and smel, bound up in a posie are more delightful, and do catch the sense more then any *single* flower; or as many colours curiously disposed by a skillfull pensil, make up a lovely picture, which one colour alone would not do, and as that is the chief instrument which hath *most strings*, and that the best musick that is playd upon *most strings*, and that the best lesson that hath most *division*, so is it here: The mystery of Christs Administrations to his Church, were not so beautifull, were it all of a colour, were it all plain work, though all prosperity &c. No, but a ground work of *black*, sets off the *brighter* colours with a greater grace, so doth the Churches Adversity, the Churches Prosperity, and her *fruits* inlarge her *mercies*, the *Long suffering of our Lord is Salvation.*

So for particular believers, there is a *variety* in their conditions outward and inward, and this is the excellency thereof; there is *hope* and *fear*, *comfort* and *discouragement*, *health* and *sickness*, *temptations* and *inlargements*, *sin* and *grace*; and the ground-work being laid in these black colours, sin, and desertion, and affliction &c. the light, and life, and love of Christ are illustrated hereby; sin *abounds*, grace *super-abounds*; they are cast down and laid low with temptations, raised high wth consolations. That ship mounts up neerest to the heavens that hath its vicissitudes of descending very low, by reason of unequal waves. *Jam jam tacturos tartara* &c. *jam jam sydera summa*; their prayers are the better, their love the founder, their faith is more exercised. Thus you see, how Christs administration is as

Rom. 5. 20. 21.

a lovely Song, the subject whereof is variety it self; and this the Lord would have us to consider, when he calls it *a Song of Songs*, and would have us delighted with it as he is, and if we could but get up to the top of some mountain to see all the variety, and how it is ordered and disposed beautifully, it would inamour us: what variety of dispensation hath there been since God made *Adam*, and put him in paradise! We see man up & down, and up again, what then is the variety of the whole mistery, which though we cannot see distinctly and particularly, yet the Lord hath given us an abstract of it, (*q*) in the Propheſies, though a deluge hide the particulars! And thus the Lord would have us to look upon one time and passage with another. If you look upon a most beautifull pi-

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cture, and look upon one colour of it, especially if it be the saddest and darkest, there is no beauty in it; but set the whole *variety* in your eye, and then it is delightful; So let your eye be upon the Churches *beauty*, as wel as her *blackness*; look on the *issue* God gives out of temptation, as wel as his action in *leading* into temptation.

2. There is *Rhime* in some Songs, and herein the *Hebrew* doth Symbolize with the *English* more then the *Greek* or *Latine* do; Rhime is when *one line answers another in sound*, as wel as in number of feet; Thus God makes one time or age to Rhime to another, one Christians heart, condition, temptations to Rhime to another; our *Chastisement* to Rhime to our *sins*, that such a sin is suited in the Chastisement; *returnes* of mercies to Rhime to

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our *prayers*, Rhime makes the Song the more pleaſant, though the matter be but ordinary, and this commends the adminiſtration of Chriſt, that it is all *harmony*, all Rhime (*q*) croſſes and mercies, ſins and duties altogether, *All work together for good*, Rom. 8. 28 through the love of Chriſt, the love of Chriſt makes the ſame *ending* of all his diſpenſations, they ſound all alike, and that ſound which ends all, is *Love*.

3. Songs do, in a more eminent manner, glory in the *Ornament* of all manner of *ellegancies*, then proſe. As *Metaphors*, *ſimilitudes*, *tropes* and *figures*, and moſt amiable *reſemblances*, taken from *Jewels*, *ſpices*, and *vineyards*, *Orchards*, *Gardens*, *wineſellars*, and the chiefeſt beauties, and greateſt varieties of al the works, both of God and man; the Songs in Scripture are the eleganteſt

parts

parts of Scripture, *Moſes* and *Deborahs* Songs &c. Agreeably, the Adminiſtration of Chriſts Kingdom is full of *elegancies*, and they that have ſpiritual *eyes*, and *eares* that can *try words*, do admire them: what elegancies in bringing *Iſrael* out of *Egypt*! it is ſaid, Deut. 32. he *bare them upon Eagles wings*; Eſpecially now in theſe latter days; this part of the Song that is now fulfilling abounds herein. What *high ſtrains* of providence & *neat contrivances*! Every other *work* is an *elegancy*. The actions of our enemies are nothing but *Ironies*; they ſpeak evil againſt us, but it is intended againſt themſelves; *The wicked is inſnared in the works of his own hands*: the *Biſhops* made *Cyphers*, inſtead of making the Parliament ſo. Look abroad amongſt the *Turks* and *Indians*, where Chriſt hath no viſible Church nor people,

ple, and there is no ſuch *needle-work* of providence, and ſo it hath been from the beginning. Gods *name* therefore hath been *great in Iſrael*, only in *Iſrael*; The Lord would not have us think, only, that things are adminiſtred in a juſt way, but in the moſt comely, excellent and *heroical* way. That which the *wiſe Ladies* of *Siſera's* Mother, are ſuppoſed to ſay of *Siſera's* prey in *Deborah's* Song, may be ſaid of the adminiſtration or providence of *Chriſts* Kingdom, the whole piece of it. *It is a prey of divers colours, of divers colours of needle work, of divers colours of needle work fit for the necks of them that take the ſpoyl*; Chriſt is not content to provide things *wholſom*, but through the inlargedneſs of his heart, he makes all *toothſom* for his Church; we have not only *meat* but *ſauce*. For this way he hath choſen to make known

Pſal. 76. 1
Pſa. 99. 2.

known his *manifold wisdom*, and to unfold it. *Ephes.* 3. 10. And beloved, that particular believers do not observe so much in Christs *private* administrations to them, is long of their *eyes*. There are Christians, that should another write the history of Christ and their mutual carriages (which are transient, and little heeded by themselves, perhaps) they would admire them, & be exceedingly delighted therewith: how Christ governs their spirits, answers their prayers, subdues their corruptions, exercises their graces, the lively and lovely *touches* in all these, could they be described by a pen, would even proceed to a ravishment of the heart of whoever should understand them. The elegant ways that Christ hath to *fall* off, and *come on* in his love, his *chastising* and *cherishing* love.

Therefore

Therefore let us not look with ſuch diſmal apprehenſions upon Chriſts adminiſtrations, publike or particular, *It is I*, ſays Chriſt, *be not affraid*; ſo I ſay it is a *Song*, therefore be not affraid, Chriſts heart was in *love*, in the original *invention* of it, and ſo it is in the immediate and particular *acting* of things, it is a *love-ſong*, a *marriage-ſong*, for ſo they were wont to have Songs at their weddings in former times, and when the Churches marriage with Chriſt is ſolemnized [who is now eſpouſed] then ſhal this Song be ſung with *underſtanding* and unſpeakable delight. *Uſe.*

2. *Be not weary and impatient*, we do not uſe to be weary of hearing a delightful Song; Songs have that advantage above proſe, that they ſteal away the eare with a great deal of pleaſure. Certainly, if you did but heare *Uſe. 2.*

the

the melody of this Song, and did discern the curiousnes of the compoſure: I mean, could you perceive the ſweet, ſpirituall ſtrains of Divine working in and for the Church, and particular believers, we ſhould not need to crave your patience. Why beloved, if you do not underſtand nor admire it your ſelvs, through your dulneſs and heavines, yet give the *Lord* leave to *ſing out his Song*; have that civility and reſpect to him: *Chriſt* is *taken* with it, therefore there is great *worth* in it; The long ſuffering of the Lord is ſalvation: if it were not a lovely Song, Chriſt would never *doaze* himſelf with ſinging of it.

Philoſophers ſay, If we could hear the muſick of the *ſphears* we might live upon it.

3. *Let us ſing this Song*, as we find the Church ſinging ſome parts of it. *Rev.* 5.9. & 14.3. and 15.3. You may ſee there what the Song is, and who they are that ſing

sing it, such only as are *redeemed from the earth* [i.] either such as are truly *sanctified*, or more strictly such as are redeemed from the *earthly Kingdom* of *Antichrist*: and indeed none but such can see a beauty and a glory in the administrations of Christ, none but such can rejoyce in them. Therefore I call only upon such; you that are the *Lambs wife*, sing this Song with lightsome hearts, observe all the ways of Christ with your spirits, how he walks towards you in outward and inward things, what *Rules measures* and *proportions* he observes in your temptations, that they be not above your mastery; and in your comforts, that they be not too strong for you neither; observe the variety and change that is in your hearts, temptations, conditions, conversations, in Christs discoveries, and manife-

Oh how amiable a ſight it is to ſee brethren live together in unity; but more admirable to ſee contraries &c. This is the glory of Chriſts ſcepter it reconciles the Wolfe and the Lamb, the Lyon and the Kid.

ſtations of himſelf to you, and how harmoniouſly theſe *work together*, for your good and Chriſts glory, when he makes himſelf the more welcom to you, by keeping from you ſometimes; obſerve what muſick his hand makes by touching *contrary* ſtrings (*q*) he ſtrikes a *baſe* and a *treble* together; many times the *publike* note is *high*, and thy *particular low*; a ſpiritual mercy and an outward croſſe ſtrike together, or an outward mercy and an inward temptation: Obſerve how *certain* and unmoveable your *happyneſs* is: the whole Song would be ſpoyled and run *lame* [*q*] if one particular, that God hath determined, ſhould miſcarry: therefore your ſins and infirmities ſhal not be able to hurt you: nay theſe together with your afflictions, are part of the Song; *I am black but comely*, I

ſpeak

speak not this, that you should slight sin, or not watch against it: no, he that hath tasted of the grace of Christ, will *not sin that grace may abound*, though he *loves that grace well.*

Let us sing this Song with lightsom hearts, with grace in our hearts; *David* had Songs of pure adversity of his *deep waters*, but here is more sweet then bitter in our conditions, whether publike or private.

1. Remember the *burthen* of the Song is *Love: so God loved his Church* (and so thy soul) must be brought in at the end of every staff, yea at the end of chastning: *whom I love, I rebuke and chasten.*

2. The Angels have begun the Quire, when Christ was first manifested, *glory to God in the highest.*

3. It is a Song worth our ad-

miration, for it was penned by the best wit that ever was, even the *wisdom of God* himself. It was framed for the *glory* of his *dearest Son, and his spouse the Church*, in whom he so delights. We love to see such passages *acted* in a story or a shew: why should we not much more be taken with this *real* Song? If the invention of the Father himself, could contrive a sweet and glorious piece, then this is such. *Can we be delighted* [says one] *to hear a heathen Poet sing a fabulous story of Hercules*, their great Champion, going down to Hell, and bringing thence the *Lady Proserpina*, and shall we not take more pleasure in hearing of Christs descending into the grave for us, and recovering his Church out of the hands of Death and Hell?

Can we not without such affection read the tragicall fiction of some one dying for a deare friend, or the passages between two passionate lovers, the several hard fortunes they ranfor one another, with one another; and have we no affections for these more reall parts and transactions?

I have one thing more to commend unto you, and that is, that you

you would so observe and sing this song, I mean, be so taken with the workings of Christ for us, and in us, as to be *turned thereby into such a mind, and into such actions as please Christ.* *Historians*, and *Poets* tell us wonderfull effects of Songs and Musick upon hearers; how *Amphion* with the musick of his Harp, *drew stones and trees* together for the building of *Thebes*. Oh now that my discourse this day of this Song, or rather your *reall sense* of the sweetness of it, might draw you together as *materials* for the *new Jerusalem*, that your bodies, your spirits, your purses, your prayers, your word and deed might all be ready for advancing the honour of Christ and your own happyness, in the present designs! You will say, should we *give all for a Song*, then we were fools indeed? My beloved, it is

such a Song, as God the Father, and Christ, and the Angels sing, and are delighted with continually, and to hear how the Saints shall sing it one day in the *kingdom* of their Father, will be a torment to those that are shut out of this Quire, and provoke their howling. To reconcile you to the present administration, I name but 3 things.

I am black but comely. v. 5.

1. *Compare* and lay together one passage with another, one string makes no musick.

2. *Cover* the unpleasant and uncomely parts, with cleanly names and notions, as we do in our bodies; put *most honour* upon those parts that have *least* in themselves: thus the subjection of *Judah* to *Pharoah* is set forth by an heroical expression. *v.* 9. of this *Chap.* *A company of horses in Pharoahs Chariot*: a Magnificent expression of servitude, not

Aſſes but Horſes, not Jades in a Cart, but Horſes in a Chariot, yea a Kings Chariot.

3. Conſider your *acceptableneſs* to *God* in every paſſage, time, change or condition: Chriſt loves you as wel in your *night gown*, as in your *curious dreſs*, as in the verſe forementioned. I have compared thee O my love, to a company of Horſes: *I have compared thee*; Thou haſt ſold thy ſelf thither, but I have put glory upon that condition, for thy ſake: I have compared thee, *O My Love, My Love* ſtill, though a ſlave, a *Captive* to *Pharoah*!

FINIS.

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